

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 and 21 stand rejected; and claims 23-26 are withdrawn from consideration as being directed to a non-elected invention.

The amendments to claims 1 and 8 are believed to clearly distinguish the invention from the prior art, and entry at this stage of prosecution is respectfully requested as placing the case in condition for allowance. Withdrawn method claims 23-26 including independent claims 23 and 25 have been amended to include all of the limitations of amended claim 8. Claim 24 was amended to correct a typographical error. Rejoinder pursuant to MPEP § 821.04 is respectfully requested upon allowance of corresponding product claim 8 directed to a spark plug.

Review and reconsideration on the merits are requested.

Claims 1-4 and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 06-338376 (JP '376).

Claims 5 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP '376 in view of U.S. Patent 6,215,234 to Abe et al.

Claims 8-12, 15 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP '376 in view of U.S. Patent 6,045,424 to Chang et al.

Claims 13 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP '376 in view of Chang et al, further in view of Abe et al.

JP '376 was cited as disclosing a spark plug meeting each of the terms of the rejected claims, including an igniter 12 welded to the ground electrode, a "precious alloy electrode" formed in the igniter on the ground or center electrode, and having a sum of nitrogen and oxygen

gas content of the Pt-nickel alloy composing the igniter of 100 ppm or less. The igniter is said to include an igniter section 19 composed of a metallic material whose principle component is one of platinum and iridium, and a weldment section 20 composed of the metallic material of the igniter section and the material of the ground electrode.

The Examiner relied on Chang et al as teaching a spark plug having an igniter tip made of a noble metal having a mean crystal grain diameter of 250 microns. The Examiner relied on Abe et al as teaching a spark discharge gap of 0.2 mm to 0.4 mm within the claimed range of from 0.2 mm to 0.6 mm.

Applicants traverse, and respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider in view of the amendments to the claims and the following remarks.

The igniter (12) of JP '376 is formed of elements 19 and 20, both of which are fused sections. In contrast, the igniter (31 or 32) of the present invention is formed of an unfused igniter section and a fused weldment section. See, for example, Fig. 2 showing unfused igniter section 31 or 32 and fused weldment sections W₁ and W₂. This structure is also described at page 3, lines 24-31 of the specification. JP '376, which is entirely missing an unfused igniter section, neither teaches nor suggests the present invention. The claim amendment clearly distinguishes over the applied prior art, and withdrawal of the foregoing rejections is respectfully requested.

Withdrawal of all rejections, rejoinder of withdrawn claims 23-26, and allowance of claims 1-15, 21 and 23-26 is earnestly solicited.

In the event that the Examiner believes that it may be helpful to advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number indicated below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



Abraham J. Rosner
Registration No. 33,276

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

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